



# POTAWATOMI

RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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Potawatomi RC&D Council  
315 W Green St  
Marshall, MI 49068-1518

P: 269-789-2354  
F: 269-789-2357

E-mail: [jim.marshall@mi.usda.gov](mailto:jim.marshall@mi.usda.gov)  
Web: [www.potawatomircd.com](http://www.potawatomircd.com)  
Coordinator: Jim Marshall

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## Hart's Lake Property Preserved

The Fort Custer Military Base is one of the largest open spaces still left in southern Michigan (7,500+ acres). On its eastern boundary the City of Battle Creek has owned an undeveloped property (418 acres) with a pristine, natural lake called **Hart's Lake**.



The Harts Lake property is some of the most pristine wildlife habitat in southwest Michigan. The property consists of beautiful Harts Lake (110 acres), highly diverse and high quality wetlands (90 acres) and 218 acres of rolling forests and grass covered uplands. The Hart's Lake property is an invaluable natural resource in a quickly urbanizing area. The Kalamazoo River watershed has been greatly impacted by the urbanization of southwest Michigan. The Hart's Lake Conservation Buffer purchase has realized the dream and long term goal to preserve more open space to insure the ecological integrity of this area. In an area where development has, and is,

taking over the land, the Hart's Lake Property is a jewel that shines with permanent, brilliant splendor.

A coalition of concerned conservation organizations, led by Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MDMVA), Calhoun Conservation District, WK Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek Community Foundation, the City of Battle Creek-Battle Creek Unlimited, Kalamazoo Nature Center, The Nature Conservancy, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, and Potawatomi Resource Conservation and Development Council planned to help set aside this extremely valuable open space through acquisition of the property to act as a natural conservation buffer landscape for Fort Custer (If the property were to be developed, the training operations at Ft. Custer would be jeopardized).

A Department of Defense (DOD), federal) Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) grant was applied for and approved for \$1 million to help purchase this land in 2007. An additional \$1 million dollar grant was given by the WK Kellogg Foundation for the purchase of this spectacular property. The Calhoun Conservation District purchased 325 acres (Hart's Lake itself, directly adjacent wetlands and upland buffer) of the property using the above mentioned grants and now holds title to the land.

The land is open to the public for non-consumptive/passive recreational uses such as hiking, sightseeing, bird watching, non-motorized boating, photography and other passive recreational activities. No fishing will be allowed in the Lake until a comprehensive fish study has been completed.



Potawatomi RC&D currently sits on the multi-agency Hart's Lake Management Advisory Board that provides direction and input for the long-term management and protection of this incredible property. A long term management plan is currently being drafted by federal, state, and local government agencies and non-profits that will address the long-term management and perpetual protection of the property. The management plan will address a wide range of issues including fisheries, forestry, wetlands, grasslands, hunting, hiking trail management as well as all other facets of managing and protecting this incredibly diverse and unique piece of property.

Further funding efforts are currently underway to raise funds to purchase the remaining 100 acres +/- of upland on the north end of the parcel in the next 2 years. The planning work and acquisition efforts are still underway and are being spearheaded by the Calhoun Conservation District, Potawatomi Resource Conservation & Development Council, and USDA-NRCS, in its role as the federal agency providing guidance and oversight to the RC&D program.

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With public input from local citizens, interested organizations, and governments, the Potawatomi RC&D's mission is to assist local communities and the public to improve their standard of living and achieve sustainable economic development through the sound utilization, conservation, and/or protection of our area's natural resources. The Potawatomi RC&D is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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